

QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY GATEWAY

January 2, 2012

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Mission

*We will enhance
the quality of life
in Queen Anne's
County by
preserving
families,
protecting
children and
vulnerable adults
and by
empowering
individuals to
achieve
independence.*

Director's Spotlight

Hello Queen Anne's County and the whole state of Maryland! Again we are presenting our major accomplishments from the past six months as part of one of our PQI Team's ongoing project.

It's been very busy, but everybody says that these days. But it is true. The wonder of it all is that our staff, who now often refer to themselves as a TEAM, keep at it as they know they are helping others in this important job. We stop to think at times, where would our customers be if we weren't here to guide them through the programs and services we provide?

This time next year we will show numbers that show specifically, how our customers are better off because of what we do. Our new strategic plan will begin on July 1, 2012, complete with performance measures to depict an improvement in lives, we hope. If not, we will have to face a harsh reality, but will know to improve our services to have a better outcome. I am looking forward to leading my team to that end. I am comforted in knowing that in 6 more months I will be reporting initial outcomes as looking positive as we move forward.

Happy Spring to all!

Family Investment Programs

The Family Investment team of Queen Anne's County DSS has continued to process an average of 98 percent of all assistance claims received within the federally required 30-day window. Persistence and teamwork allows the team to exceed their goals, and to conquer new challenges in the form of increased applications and more stringent policy requirements. The Family Investment Unit's continued success and the results of their hard work is reflected in the improved conditions of the residents served in Queen Anne's County.

Community Outreach Programs

This has been a very exciting year in the outreach world, which provided new venues to carry our message. For the first time the Agency participated in National Night Out on August 2nd. We were able to reach many community members. We also saw quite a few employees and partners. On September 24th, Pamela Turner-Tingle and Susan Anthony spoke to the New Life Community Methodist Church congregation about the services we provide. We are also running an informational clip about the online application system Maryland Sail (www.marylandsail.org) in The Update, a local free newspaper.

October brought the first delivery of perishable, non-sellable items from Food Link. It's awesome to see our tables fill up on Monday mornings with cakes, bagels, breads, and other goodies. It's more awesome to see our customers treat themselves to something they might otherwise pass up for a necessity. We should definitely add our partnership with Food Link to the Things we are Thankful this Season!

Career Center Services

Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services "Career Center" continues to shine. The Queen Anne's County Career Center is open to the public Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Our partner Department of Labor License and Regulations is available in the Career Center on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to assist customers as needed. The Career Center has many resources that can assist county residents determine what type of career is right for them by using Career Scope, developing skills to compete, and exploring Career directions using O*Net. The Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NPEP) prepares non-custodial parents for employment to help them meet their child support obligations. Jobs skills training classes are available to eligible customers. These classes are designed to enhance interviewing skills, achieve an attitude for success, project a professional appearance and develop networking skills. Classes are offered in 4-week sessions on Mondays & Wednesdays. Career Specialists are available daily and assist TCA eligible customers to view open positions on the internet, create resumes, and set career goals. Currently, thirty-four participants have reported employment with 30% reporting earned income of more \$10.00/hr. and two participants are currently enrolled in a certificate program.



Denime McCain, AD for FIA presented Betty Whyte, OHEP Coor. with a 25 years of county service award at the Agency's All Staff meeting in December.

Energy Assistance

We are very happy to announce that Katie Comegys has joined the MEAP Family! In true Katie fashion, she jumped right into the mix of things during the busiest time of the year. So far this year, 1160 applications have been received in the office. Staff are working diligently to keep our customer's electric on. Staff will be informed as soon as the heating funds become available. We are very excited to introduce the new MEAP Hotline. Customers can obtain general program information, request applications, and leave a message for the MEAP program. Since activation, the hotline has significantly reduced the number of phone calls that are taken by Case Managers or the front desk requesting general program descriptions.

Child Care Subsidy (Formerly POC)

We are accepting applications for the Child Care Subsidy program, but the wait list is still in effect.

Customer Service Awards

One of the last things that Katie Comegys did as our Receptionist was to accept the 2011 DHR Customer Service Award. And, what an appropriate way to recognize the 6 years of dedicated service that Katie provided at the front desk. Since Katie's first day (March 21, 2005), she realized that greeting customers and answering the phones was just a very small part of running the front desk. Her commitment to learning each service that the agency provided and keeping informed about the different resources within the community made her a valuable asset to both internal and external customers. As Katie gets adjusted in her new position as Administrative Assistant in the OHEP program we wish her exciting challenges and opportunities to serve our customers in new ways.



Vision

We envision a quality of life in Queen Anne's County in which individuals and families achieve success and are safe from abuse and neglect.

Values

We must be involved in maintaining a work environment that values teamwork, respect, dignity and honesty within the organization and community.

We are committed to a high quality of service that empowers individuals and families, assists in times of crisis and economic hardship and protects individuals from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Child Support Awareness Month – August 2011

The month of August is recognized as child support awareness month, and the local Queen Anne's County Office used the time to foster and strengthen relationships within the community. It started with unit meetings and brainstorming, suggestions and research, and ended with calendar of events the unit could include within and around its usual business day.

Each Wednesday a table was set up, complete with banner and useful child support literature, in the lobby. A member of the child support unit manned the table, offering information and answering general questions for clients. Similarly, this kind of outreach extended outside the office. The Q.A. County Fair, a week-long event that draws quite a crowd, also served as a venue to distribute literature, answer questions, and hand out promotional giveaways. And lastly, because we are in the business of child support enforcement, we sent letters to select non-custodial parents. For a minimal (\$25.00) upfront payment, the office would release Driver's License Suspension. The offer served as a limited (during the month of August only) opportunity for these non-custodial parents to remove sanctions, despite limited resources, and from the office's perspective, open a dialogue and engage in moving delinquent cases back to a paying status.

Whether informing, assisting or enforcing, the goal was to create additional opportunities to engage the community. Just as important, the Talbot County Office of Child Support took the lead and sponsored an event for regional staff. They employed the services of Dr. Dale Henry as a motivational speaker, catered lunch and organized an off-site venue. Queen Anne's, Kent, Talbot, Caroline and Dorchester County child support offices met, talked, and enjoyed the poignant message delivered by Dr. Henry. Just as we fostered opportunities to engage our clients, this meeting engaged staff, and served as an example to the value of direct communication.

Child Support First Year Anniversary

From almost any perspective, the Queen Anne's County Child Support Unit is in a better place after one full year returned to state service. Individual staff have settled in to their respective roles, new staff have a year of child support experience under their belt, and all the loose ends (files, filing and file cabinets) have all been put in order. In short, the daily business of child support has settled into business as usual.

From a unit perspective, child support met two of its four state goals in establishment of support orders and paternity, respectively, for the 2011 fiscal year. As a measurement of success, this left Q.A. County ranked first in the state for establishment of orders and second in the state for establishment of paternity. Collections were a bit more modest in terms of goals: we ended the year collecting 66.32% of current support and 68.48% on arrears, but in terms of results, this meant a total of \$3,093,696.00 collected and distributed to Queen Anne's County orders through September 2011.

Finally, our unit has merged and become a part of the Department of Social Services. We share in the broader efforts of the agency through PQI Teams, office events and activities and most important, in sharing information and efforts to serve the needs of our community.

Child Support First Year Anniversary continued

And so in all phases, we are better prepared to meet our challenges and goals going forward. This is not to say the process stops with our settling into a comfort zone. The needs of our clients and goals require better results, and our current condition simply represents a stable starting point. As we enter into the New Year, the child support unit will continue to evaluate and adapt our processes to suit the needs of our clients.

Child Support Worker of the Year

Melissa Winborne has been in child support enforcement in excess of 7 years and is currently the Lead Worker in the Queen Anne's County office. She has been an excellent lead worker and has a wonderful rapport with the Administration and staff. She manages her caseload extremely well, takes a proactive approach to staff and the flow of work and is constantly thinking of ways to develop and utilize staff's strengths and does not hesitate to address weaknesses when they become evident.

Melissa is always cognizant of the challenges of a small office. The transition of the child support office from a private vendor (PSI) in October of 2010 proved particularly challenging but Melissa was up to the task. Her easy-going demeanor made that transition much easier for staff and clients alike. She has been an excellent example to her coworkers with regard to her level of professionalism, willingness to assist when needed and her overall work ethic.

Melissa has played an integral role in the success of the team and the Child Support Program in Queen Anne's County and is an invaluable member of the staff.



Melissa Winborne, CS Worker of the year with her supervisor, Lori Robinson

Look closely at our Child Support Assistant Director, Kathy



Services Updates

Shore Birds Game

On August 12, 2011 social services foster care staff and foster parents and their families enjoyed an evening of fun at a Shore Birds game as part of a regional foster care activity. Courtesy of the Shore Birds, the families were provided with a meal ticket and enjoyed a beautiful display of fireworks!

Foster Care and Adoptive Family Picnic

The Queen Anne's County Circuit Court and the Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services hosted its annual Foster Care and Adoptive family picnic on August 23, 2011 at Tuckahoe State Park at 5:00 P.M. Approximately forty people attended the picnic. The meal was catered by a local vendor who provided a delicious meal for the families and staff. The children enjoyed playing at the Park playground and visiting with the Circuit Court Judge, The Honorable Thomas Ross, and the Circuit Court Master, Patrick Palmer. The weather was perfect and a great time was had by all.

Governor's Award for Domestic Violence

Dan Johnson received an award from the Governor's Office in October 2011 for 5 years of service working at the YWCA with their abuse intervention program.

Bowling Party

The Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services held its annual National Adoption Month Celebration on November 4, 2011 at the Queen Anne Bowling Center. We had 24 people attend to celebrate the occasion.

The Department also honored the Mears family as the adoptive family of the year giving them a gift certificate to a local restaurant.

Foster Care Holiday Celebration

It was a festive scene inside the Kramer Center, where about 75 people attended the Holiday party on December 13, 2011 for foster children and foster parents. Families enjoyed a turkey dinner catered by Susie's Kitchen and a visit from Old St. Nick. The children received presents donated by Kim Calvert and her "Giving Bus". Ms. Calvert a bus driver and the families of children on her bus route provided the gifts for each foster child as well as a stocking and gift for Christmas Day. Besides the kids and foster moms and dads, the party-goers included Judge Thomas G. Ross, and Circuit Court staff, as well as Director, Cathy Dougherty and staff of the Department of Social Services. The highlight of the evening was when each child came up to sit on Santa's lap. Donations to The Queen Anne's County Generous Juror Program made this event possible.

County Officials Sign Interagency Agreement!

On September 27, 2011, representatives from Queen Anne's County Dept. of Social Services, Queen Anne's County Office of the Sheriff; State's Attorney's Office for Queen Anne's County, Maryland State Police and Centreville Police Department, met to confirm their commitment to protect children, preserve families, and ensure that abusers are appropriately punished and/or rehabilitated by signing an Interagency Agreement.

The Child Abuse Response and Evaluation (CARE) Center, a Child Advocacy Center, coordinates the investigative, medical, mental health and legal response to allegations of child sexual abuse, and serious physical abuse and neglect.

Located in the Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services, the CARE Center is a child friendly environment intended to ease the trauma of victimization. The CARE Center staff ensure that victims of child abuse and, their non-offending care-givers, have access to supports and services in a safe, culturally respectful environment. Approximately 50 child interviews were completed at the CARE Center in 2010. Medical examinations, when deemed necessary, are completed at the Talbot County Children's Advocacy Center.



Standing up: Dawn Duigan, CAC Coordinator; Susan Coppage, Social Services AD; Detective Sgt. Bruce Layton, Sheriff's Office; Lillian Kirby, Chairperson for CARE Fund Raising Committee; Cpl. John Maiello, MSP Criminal Investigation Division; Christine Dulla, Deputy State's Attorney; Frances Williams-Crawford, Social Services CPS Supervisor

Sitting down: Lt. Konrad Meil, Centreville Police Dept.; Sheriff Gary Hoffman; Cathy Dougherty, Social Services Director; Lance Richardson, States Attorney; Lt. Dwayne Bordman, Commander of Centreville MSP Barrack

Through the signing of this Interagency Agreement, agencies are not only confirming their continued commitment to children and families affected by child abuse, they are also solidifying the CARE Center's operating procedures and roles of each agency within the partnership.

By working together and enhancing the individual efforts of each agency, children in Queen Anne's County will experience quicker resolutions and less trauma.

LGA Updates

Hurricane Irene

On August 27, 2011, Hurricane Irene arrived on the Eastern Shore of Maryland bringing with it heavy rain and high winds. The Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services was called upon to open two shelters with the assistance of the Health Department, the Department of Aging and the American Red Cross. Staff reported to Church Hill Elementary School and Centreville Middle School to open and manage the shelters. This was the first time our agency has been actively involved with shelter management. Staff arrived at the shelters ready to assist in any way needed. "I am so proud of the commitment and support our staff demonstrated during this event," says Cathy Dougherty, Director. "They demonstrated a high level of service to those in need."

A debriefing was held following the event and the comments were very complimentary concerning our many partners including the staff of the school, the police departments, the Health Department, the Department of Aging and especially the cooks.

DHR Internal Audit

The Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services was recently audited by the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Human Resources. The Office of the Inspector General audits all local departments once every three years. The examination covered the period from April 1, 2008 through June 30, 2011. The audit was conducted for the purpose of verifying the Local Department's financial transactions, economic performance and compliance with DHR and applicable Federal and State regulations. The examination of the accounts and records of Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services resulted in seven findings: Social Services-2 findings; Child Enforcement Administration-1 finding; and Family Investment-4 findings. The LGA unit did not have any findings. In the opinion of the Office of the Inspector General, the federal state and local funds received and disbursed were recorded and reported in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and procedures of DHR except as cited in the findings noted.

Social Services Advisory Board

As we face the beginning of 2012 we would like to reflect on the past six months.

Summer was a time for rest, relaxation and travel for many including Advisory Board members but several members helped man the booth at the County Fair. Also, several Board members met in August to review and finalize plans for the fall fundraiser.

The Second Annual Silent Auction fundraiser was held at Doc's Riverside Grill on September 21, 2011. The weather forced the event to be held inside but the Board members and their friends and families along with community members enjoyed an evening bidding on the fabulous auction items.

The Family Preservation Fund continues to grow with proceeds from the auction. Letters were sent to community organizations and the response resulted in over \$2000 to be added to the fund.

A food drive held at the QACHS vs. KIHS soccer game on October 11 resulted in many donated items to be added to the Department's food pantry. Awareness of the community needs led to the planning of a second food drive held at the QACHS vs. KIHS football game on November 4th.

It's always sad to lose Board members and it was hard to say good bye to active member, Robin Heinecke. On the upside we have welcomed new members, Sharon Addison and Bobby Helfenbein.

Director Cathy Dougherty recently nominated the Board for the "Board of the Year Award" to be presented at the MASSB Fall Conference in Frederick in October. Chairperson Kate Tumulty was also nominated for the "Board Member of the Year" award. Unfortunately, none of the Board members were able to attend, but Cathy graciously accepted the award for the Board and presented it to us with great flourish at our last meeting. Plans are being made for the 2012 Fall MASSB Conference to be held in Queen Anne's County. More to follow in the future!

Advisory Board members are excited to serve on this board and want the Department to know that we want to help them in any way possible. In Kate's words, "It's a privilege to serve on your board!"

Sharon L. Robertson
Advisory Board

10/11/11 Food Drive



Wellness Tips

- Set goals that work! Think about what you want to accomplish this year in terms of your health. Set a realistic timeline with “mini goals,” and take practical steps to reach each one!
- Cherish your heart! Select foods low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium. Include at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise, five days a week or more.
- Eat right for health! Choose whole grains rather than refined grains, and have a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Relax, refresh, and renew! Keep stress at bay by scheduling some relaxation for yourself daily. Whatever healthy activity makes you feel refreshed and renewed is the thing to do!
- Commit to staying fit! Physical fitness brings a stockpile of benefits, including stronger bones, lower blood pressure, increased energy, and a reduced risk for many diseases. Find exercises you love so that fitness becomes a key part of your lifestyle.
- Water is the clear winner! Nothing beats cold, delicious water for a healthy beverage choice. With no calories, fat, sugar, caffeine, or preservatives, it keeps you hydrated and refreshed!
- Healthy skin is always in! Sun exposure raises the risk of skin cancer and ages skin prematurely. Protect yourself by using sunscreen, wear wide-brimmed hat, long sleeves, long pants, and avoid direct sunlight between 10 am – 4 pm!
- Be safe and prepared! Knowing first-aid basics can save lives. Keep a first-aid kit at home and in your vehicle. Take a first-aid and CPR class. Help prevent injuries by doing things the safe way wherever you are!
- Keep good vision in sight! At every age, your eyes deserve proper care. Have your eyes checked as recommended. When outside, wear sunglasses that block 100% of UVA and UVB rays!
- Take care of yourself! Perform self-exams to detect early signs of abnormal lumps. Schedule your yearly exams to prevent cancer!
- Moderation is the key! Portion control is a major factor in healthy eating as well as weight control. Check your serving sizes and calorie counts on packages to avoid eating more than you should. You don’t have to give up your favorite treats, just have them in a sensible amount!
- Celebrate in good health! Plan ahead so you can enjoy the holidays with less stress, more energy, and a great mood. Take stock of your many blessings as you ring in a bright new year!

Professional Development – trainings attended by staff

Contemporary Ethics in Working With Personality Disorders and Seniors;
2011 Maryland Respite Awareness Day;
Resiliency in Action – How Schools, Communities, and Families Build Bounce;
Neuropsychological Examination in Child Welfare Cases;
Permanency Practice Training;
Social Services Administration Voluntary Placement Summit;
Maryland System of Care Training Institutes;
Social Work License Examination Preparation Course;
Infant Adoption Training Initiative;
Field Supervisor Training 2011-2011;
Professional Behavior in the Workplace;
Raising the Awareness of our Kids' Journey Through Trauma, Loss and Grief;
Surviving the Stress of Being a Child Welfare Worker;
Engagement and Ethics: Use of Self;
Emergency Preparedness;
Ethics: Boundaries and Dual Relationship Issues;
Safety Seminar;
When Words Matter – Emerging Issues in Forensic Interviewing;
Regional Child Welfare Supervisor's Meeting;
Introduction to Word and Excel;
Intermediate Word and Excel;
Laughter – A Well Used Tool for Everyone;
Are You Looking Toward Tomorrow;
Overview from Dept. of Rehabilitative Services;
Overview from Priority Partners;
FIA Program Orientation;
HRDT Supervisory Training;
Working with Immigrant Families and Children

Staff enjoyed the holiday festivities by wearing their holiday sweater and hats!



Employee News

Carrie Price welcomed her Grandson Mason Tyler into the world on 7/6/11.

Nancy Roe retired from the county 7/31/11.

Jennifer Wright, MSW Intern began August 2011.

Melissa Winborne was selected as Child Support Worker of the Year, August 2011.

Gail Dadds was selected as the Employee of the Quarter for July through September.

Calisha Wilson began volunteering on 9/29/11.

Katie Comegys received the Customer Service Award on 10/4/11.

Katie Comegys accepted the OHEP clerical position on 10/10/11.

Heather Andrews was hired 11/14/11 as the Nurturing Coordinator. She is expecting her third child in June 2012.

Susan Harrison transferred into the Addiction Counselor position on 11/21/11.

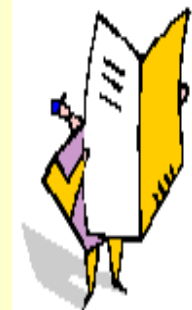
Pam Tingle retired from State service 12/1/11.

Betty Whyte celebrated 25 years of County service in December.

Patricia Melcer was hired 12/12/11 as the Child Abuse Response & Evaluation Center Coordinator.

Vera Meredith was hired 12/14/11 as the FIA Aide.

Catherine Gray, Joanna Reynolds and Eunice Stromberg, Fiscal Unit was selected as the Employees of the Quarter for October through December.



Gail Dadds
Employee of the Quarter
July through September

PQI Achievements

Action Planning Team: Continue to review and update agency policies/procedures. Policies will be placed under the All Staff icon on each desktop for convenient access. The Community Partners list was updated.

Customer Satisfaction Team: Thanksgiving and Christmas Themed Raffle Project – proceeds to purchase turkeys and hams for elderly individuals.

Employee Appreciation Team: 1) Pizza Lunch; 2) Cook Out Cooler Raffle; 3) Ice Cream Social; 4) Baked Potato Lunch; 5) Employee of the Quarter; 6) Holiday Dessert Buffett and 7) Birthday Cards.

Maryland Charities Team: Successfully collected \$1,693.50 for the 2011 Campaign through pledge sheets and special activities.

QAC Gateway Team: Publishing a Semi-Annual Newsletter, intended to inform Employees and highlight Agency Activities.

Peer Record Review Team: Review of special project in Child Support with guest speaker, Lillian Kirby. Review of the PQI accomplishments and team objectives and projects.

Program Evaluation Team: Continue to update the Screening Manual to produce an on-line resource for staff. The manual will be hyper- linked to the Program orientation Manual. One hard copy of the Screening and Procedures Manual will be maintained in the Library.

Risk Management Team: Write informational articles for local media that highlight specific programs within the agency.

Strategic and Operational Planning Team: The team reviewed the current Strategic Plan and is planning for the 2012 – 2016 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan Core Committee has been selected.



Catherine Gray
Joanna Reynolds
Eunice Stromberg
Of the Fiscal Unit
Employees of the Quarter
October through December

BIRTHDAYS

Betty Whyte – 1/1	Sharon Addison – 4/7
Peggy Landskroener – 1/11	Terri Lowther – 4/12
Judi Beskid – 1/20	Dianne Heffernan – 4/14
Brittany VanBlargan – 1/21	Alex Sweetak – 4/18
Joyce Davis – 1/27	Pam Marvel – 4/21
Bonnie McLendon – 2/2	Lori Robinson – 4/26
Patricia Gallaway – 2/10	Vera Meredith – 5/1
Daniel Johnson – 2/12	Theresa Morris – 5/6
Catherine Gray – 2/25	Tanae Colbert – 6/13
Cathy Dougherty – 2/26	Melonie Truslow – 6/18
Pat Melcer – 3/17	Nadine Mentecki – 6/19
Liz Phillips – 3/18	Darlene Kuechler – 6/20
LaWanda Green – 3/20	Joanne Hynson – 6/24
Calisha Wilson – 3/26	Marge Slama – 6/24
Melissa Winborne – 3/28	
Susan Anthony – 4/1	



Employee Appreciation Committee – Thank You!

The Employee Appreciation Committee has hosted a few events during the 2nd half of 2011. A Pizza Fundraiser was held in July. The committee also put together a Cook-Out Cooler that was filled with everything needed for a cookout. The majority of the items, including the cooler, were donated by committee members. Staff was given the opportunity to purchase raffle ticket for the cooler. The drawing for the Cook-Out Cooler was held on 8/26/11 and Betty Whyte was the lucky winner. The committee hosted an Ice Cream Social for all staff in August. The committee also hosted the popular Baked Potato Bar fundraiser in October. This year, the committee hosted a Dessert Buffet for all staff on 12/9/11. There was an abundance of desserts for all to enjoy and the room was festively decorated with pine and pointsettias. Although there are funds in the Employee Appreciation Committee fund, the majority of the desserts were donated by committee members. A special “Thank You” is extended to committee member, Joanna Reynolds, for donating her huge Christmas Tree to us.

Thank you to all staff for supporting the Employee Appreciation Committee activities this past year.

Advisory Board Members

Kate Tumulty, Chairperson; Bob Simmons, County Commissioner; Sharon Addison; Barbara Helfenbein; Bonnie Larrimore; Sharon Robertson; Veronica Holthaus; Rev. Genevieve Brown and David Quinn, Foster Parent. The Advisory Board meets - second Thursday of each month.

Newsletter Committee

Alice Collins, Doug Fraley, Peggy Landskroener, and Pam Marvel